Rattlesnakes

"Bob" G. Vallejos; being a tough, determined Taurus; plowed ahead into yet another new environment. The moist coastal air of Washington State was not helpful to his lungs. Bob could feel them beginning to rebel from years of coal dust and smoking. His repaired left leg was hurting him more and the cracked 3rd vertebra from horse busting also began to slow him down.

He and Sam took up an apartment in Everett. Bob traveled 20 miles north to Snohomish Co. for work.

"I got a job as an industrial supervisor…working for the City of Snohomish. I had 26 men (from a prison work program) I was in charge of, and these were pretty mean bastards…. they were killers. They were purportedly (in a) rehab program. I used to have to (take some of) those prisoners in my truck (to the work site). It was a rough deal, (but) it paid good money…it wasn't bad at the time."

Sam was put in yet another new school. He was always the 'new kid', with all the aggravation that goes with it. He developed a tough shell, almost to the point of being a bully. Bob hired a nice, older couple to look after Sam, once he got out of school. Still, in a short amount of time Sam grew bored and called his grandpa in Trinidad.

" 'Oh come live with me!' my dad would say, 'I've got a big semi and you get a jeep too!' Shit…he didn't have a pot to piss in."

Bob tried to talk Sam out of "the easy life" his grandpa offered.

" 'No! I wanna go with my grandpa!' Finally, I gave up. (I told Sam) I'm gonna send you to your grandpa and you're gonna be disappointed cause he ain't got nothing waitin for you. 'Yes, he does!' So I went…and flew him home…he'll get there safe…no goin by bus."

"Turned out just like his grandpa. The last of the boys, the youngest…"

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Bob was 47 now, with little to show for his tormented life on the run. Several of the little doves he and Nellie brought into this world, became opportunistic vultures, and finally evolved into albatross. They weighed heavily on his heart and brought him down more and more. Stooping his tough exterior. He saw this as his penitence for what he did in Korea.

Bob's father continued to demand his only son's loyalty and support; more so now that Gertrude had died. On a mindless, gut level, he gave in to his father's demands.

"I love my dad…. but I have absolutely no respect for him."

Bob was always able to make more money away from his dad than with him.

"Oh yeah! Hell I would of never seen a penny in all of my life if I'd of stayed with (them), and I wouldn't of survived, cause I would have been a drunk probably worse than him, and I'd of been a bigger pot head than my kids are…"

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After working with convicts for about a year, Bob found another more satisfying job. Working with handicapped kids. The city was refurbishing a large old building for use by the handicapped community. Opportunity Village was Bob's best chance to redeem himself.

After Gertrude's death, Frank decided to leave Trinidad and follow his daughter Patty and her husband Perry to Edgemont, South Dakota. Sam went with him to Edgemont where his aunt Patty had him do odd jobs for her and Perry. Mike showed up there also.

Bob was encouraged to see family together and thought he would try to give them a sense of purpose. (Since idle hands do the devil's work). While visiting them in Edgemont, Bob put in a bid for a garbage collection contract with the city of Edgemont. He did not win the garbage contract but did win a salvage contract for Igloo…an old Army Depo that had ammo bunkers, barracks and several family housing units. He immediately put his dad in charge. Heavy equipment and hired hands were added to the reclamation plan.

Bob worked to find buyers for the scrap metal and wood, which was carefully being removed, cleaned and stacked for transport. He had a special destination for the tongue & groove, oak wood flooring…. Opportunity Village.

"I was supervisor…and I was setting up Opportunity Village for the handicapped children. For this big building we had, we needed flooring. And all them barracks and buildings (at Igloo) had beautiful oak flooring. (So) I said…'hey, I got a deal for you dad, if you want to make a lot of money – quick. How much would you charge (Snohomish) for 60K feet of hard flooring?' And he says, '$15K.' That was a good price…that's 25 cents a linear foot. And he says, 'well, can you guarantee you're going to pay me that much money?' I says – yes, I'll bring you a cashier's check."

"Well, what did he do…I got to Edgemont (and) he had nothing ready. He wanted to see the check, (so) I showed him. 'Oh,' he says, 'that 15K was just for starters…I want (20K) for the flooring.' I said, 'Dad, you told me 15K…why the hell do you cross me up that way? They're not gonna pay it dad.' (Frank then said to his son) 'I got news for you buddy; you're not going back (to Snohomish).' "(So, Bob ripped up that check.)

The resulting squabble between father and son ended Bob's job at Opportunity Village. Frank succeeded in reeling Bob to South Dakota.

Furious to be embarrassed and ruined by the actions of his father, Bob took control of the reclamation contract. He was madder still to find his father and Patty had taken up residence in the Igloo Army Depo family housing and promptly kicked them out. The reclamation contract was being handled by competent drivers, including his son Mike. But once Bob started calling the shots, trucks suddenly broke down and became disabled. On top of all that, a little bird squawked to the City of Edgemont that Mr. Vallejos was a 'skitzo and child molester,' effectively cancelling liability insurance Bob needed to conduct his business.

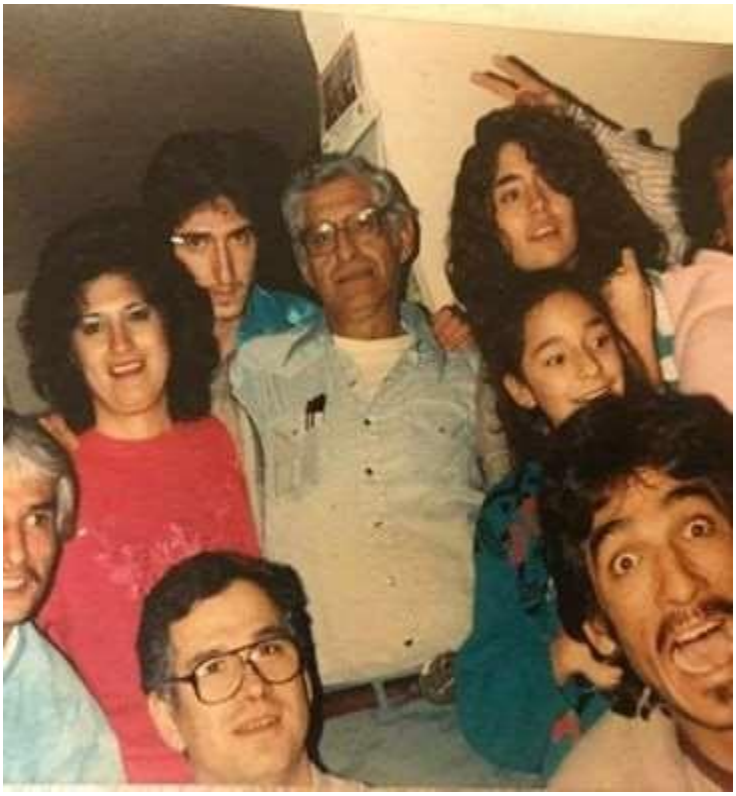
(Personal Input)

As I was recording over 40 hours of Bob's oral history, I was thinking - I had NO idea how I was going to write this man's life story. Were there any *happy* stories he could tell me?

How could he keep 'turning the other cheek', repeatedly with his father? Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung wrote volumes on the father/son relationship (or lack thereof). Bob seemed to focus on the bad memories of his life – someone or something was always the reason for his endless failures. He was living through hell here on earth - perpetual purgatory.

I concede Bob was no saint. He would tease and berate his family (just as Frank did to him). He was bullheaded, opinionated and a self-proclaimed, *horny ol soul'.* His interactions with customers, friends and business regulations were sometimes fraudulent, or less than fair. So, I could see Bob may have created much of the chaos that followed him. But his interactions with family were his Achilles Heel: his weak spot. The longing for real love and unconditional acceptance had eluded him. Guilt and shame took over his many hours alone. *The horrors seared into his brain during Korea would never leave*. He was never going to tame that rattlesnake. All *I* could do was to draw out the poisons of his personal war, calmly set them aside and enable Robert to come to life once again.

(End Input)



I saw Bob in photographs and a few videos where he was with some of his kids and their families. I asked if he ever joined them on vacation.

"No. I always stopped to see my children, whether they liked it or not. Half of them would lock the door on me. I'd just get back in my truck and take off."

Many of Bob's children were burdened with heart wrenching abuse, once they entered the foster care system. Coupled with watching their mother endure repeated beatings - they will never be able to forgive their father, for "abandoning" them. But what good comes from holding on to hurt?

"Life is what it is and we either cope with it or shoot ourselves, that's the only 2 things we can do."